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APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
10/521,526	11/07/2005	Paul Francis Stratton	M02B123	2103
20411	7590	07/26/2006	EXAMINER	
THE BOC GROUP, INC. 575 MOUNTAIN AVENUE MURRAY HILL, NJ 07974-2064			LAVILLA, MICHAEL E	
			ART UNIT	PAPER NUMBER
			1775	
DATE MAILED: 07/26/2006				

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

Office Action Summary

Application No.

10/521,526

Applicant(s)

STRATTON ET AL.

Examiner

Michael La Villa

Art Unit

1775

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) OR THIRTY (30) DAYS, WHICHEVER IS LONGER, FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

- 1) ☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on 14 January 2005 (Preliminary Amendment).
- 2a) ☐ This action is **FINAL**. 2b) ☒ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 1-7 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) 7 is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed.
- 6) ☒ Claim(s) 1-6 is/are rejected.
- 7) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are objected to.
- 8) ☐ Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

- 9) ☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☒ The drawing(s) filed on 14 January 2005 is/are: a) ☒ accepted or b) ☐ objected to by the Examiner.
Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
- 11) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

- 12) ☒ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
- a) ☒ All b) ☐ Some * c) ☐ None of:
- ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
 - ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
 - ☒ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

Attachment(s)

- 1) ☒ Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)
- 2) ☐ Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)
- 3) ☒ Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO-1449 or PTO/SB/08)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date 20050114.
- 4) ☐ Interview Summary (PTO-413)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date. _____.
- 5) ☐ Notice of Informal Patent Application (PTO-152)
- 6) ☐ Other: _____.

DETAILED ACTION

Election/Restrictions

1. Restriction is required under 35 U.S.C. 121 and 372.
2. This application contains the following inventions or groups of inventions which are not so linked as to form a single general inventive concept under PCT Rule 13.1.
3. In accordance with 37 CFR 1.499, applicant is required, in reply to this action, to elect a single invention to which the claims must be restricted.
4. Group I, claim(s) 1-6, drawn to a method of case hardening a Ti, Zr, Ti alloy, or Zr alloy article.
5. Group II, claim(s) 7, drawn to a case hardened Ti, Zr, Ti alloy, or Zr alloy article.
6. The inventions listed as Groups I and II do not relate to a single general inventive concept under PCT Rule 13.1 because, under PCT Rule 13.2, they lack the same or corresponding special technical features for the following reasons: Since the subject matter of Claim 7, which constitutes Group II, is anticipated by Morton et al. WO 99/04055. See Morton et al. (pages 3 and 4). Morton teaches a case hardened titanium article, wherein the article is first treated in an oxygen-containing atmosphere at elevated temperature. Since Claim 7 is anticipated, there can be no corresponding special technical feature, and so there is a lack of unity, and restriction is appropriate.
7. During a telephone conversation with Mr. Lau on 5 July 2006 a provisional election was made without traverse to prosecute the invention of Group I, claims 1-6. Affirmation of this election must be made by applicant in replying to this Office action. Claim 7 is withdrawn from further consideration by the examiner, 37 CFR 1.142(b), as being drawn to a non-elected invention.
8. Applicant is reminded that upon the cancellation of claims to a non-elected invention, the inventorship must be amended in compliance with 37 CFR 1.48(b)

if one or more of the currently named inventors is no longer an inventor of at least one claim remaining in the application. Any amendment of inventorship must be accompanied by a request under 37 CFR 1.48(b) and by the fee required under 37 CFR 1.17(i).

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 112

9. The following is a quotation of the second paragraph of 35 U.S.C. 112:
10. The specification shall conclude with one or more claims particularly pointing out and distinctly claiming the subject matter which the applicant regards as his invention.
11. Claims 1-6 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which applicant regards as the invention.
12. Regarding Claim 1, it is unclear what is meant by the phrase "at a pressure in the order of atmospheric pressure in an oxygen diffusion atmosphere." Should the phrase "in the order of" read "on the order of"? It is unclear whether the claimed method requires that treating the article with the claimed heat conditions must occur simultaneously at the specified claimed pressure conditions.
13. Regarding Claim 4, it is unclear whether the claimed atmosphere containing at least 5000 volumes per million of oxygen should necessarily contain non-reactive carrier gas as the balance.

Allowable Subject Matter

14. Claims 2-6 would be allowable if rewritten to overcome the rejection(s) under 35 U.S.C. 112, 2nd paragraph, set forth in this Office action and to include all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims.

15. Claim 1 would be allowable if rewritten or amended to overcome the rejection(s) under 35 U.S.C. 112, 2nd paragraph, set forth in this Office action.

16. The closest prior art is Morton et al. WO 99/04055. In Morton et al. the heat treatment occurs in air for 0.1 to 1 hours, followed by heat treatment in vacuum or inert atmosphere for 0.5 to 50 hours to result in diffused oxygen and case hardening. See Morton et al. (pages 3 through 4). This process in Morton et al. differs from the claimed process since the claimed process requires longer initial heat treatment of at least 12 hours and an atmosphere containing small, specified amounts of molecular oxygen in a non-reactive carrier gas. Morton et al. does not anticipate the claimed process and does not render it obvious.

Hence, Claims 1-6 are allowable over the reviewed prior art.

CONCLUSION

17. Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Michael La Villa whose telephone number is (571) 272-1539. The examiner can normally be reached on Monday through Friday.

18. If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Jennifer McNeil can be reached on (571) 272-1540. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 571-273-8300.

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19. Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free). If you would like assistance from a USPTO Customer Service Representative or access to the automated information system, call 800-786-9199 (IN USA OR CANADA) or 571-272-1000.

Michael La Villa
5 July 2006



MICHAEL E. LAVILLA PH.D.
PRIMARY EXAMINER